

Easter Egg Safety Tips

As we enter the Easter Season and children of all ages begin the annual tradition of coloring Easter eggs. The risk of getting a foodborne illness from eggs is low, however, the nutrients that make eggs a high-quality food are also a good growth medium for bacteria such as *Salmonella*. There are several safety recommendations that should be observed.



1. When shopping for eggs, open the carton before purchase and avoid cartons with cracked eggs. Also check the "Use by" or "Expiration" dates to be sure you have fresh eggs.
2. After purchasing eggs remember that eggs should not sit out at temperatures of 40° Fahrenheit (°F) or higher for longer than 2 hours. Refrigerate as soon as possible. Bacteria such as *Salmonella* bacteria love to grow in protein-rich food such as eggs at room temperature.
3. During refrigeration, keep eggs separate from raw meats that might drip juices that might contaminate eggshells.
4. Always wash hands thoroughly in warm, soapy water for about 20 seconds before handling eggs at every preparation step – cooking, cooling, dyeing and hiding the eggs.
5. When you boil the eggs, make sure the water is hot (185-190°F). Cool the eggs in cool water or just in the air.
6. Once the eggs are hard-boiled (either in the shell or peeled) they can be stored up to a week inside the refrigerator, not in the door.
7. Choose the areas wisely to hide the Easter eggs. Avoid areas that may come in contact with lawn chemicals, pets or wild animals.
8. Do not eat cracked eggs or eggs that have been unrefrigerated for more than 2 hours.
9. If you are using Easter eggs as part of a centerpiece, remember to cook extra eggs to eat and throw out the eggs that were part of the centerpiece.

Recommendations taken from:

1. "Play It Safe With Eggs" USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, September 2000. www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/
2. Egg Handling and Care Guide. 2nd Ed. American Egg Board. www.aeb.org/safety/egg_handling_and_care_guide.html
3. American Dietetic Association and the ConAgra Foundation Press Release, April 5, 2001.
4. "Easter Egg Safety Tips", Sears Portrait Studio. www.sears-portrait.com